

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE [USDA NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET SURVEY](#)

### **What is the [USDA National Farmers Market Manager Survey](#)?**

The USDA National Farmers Market Manager Survey is pretty much what it sounds like – a comprehensive survey of responses from actual farmers market managers across the country. Topics include farmers market operations, sales, vendor composition, hours, management structure and other issues that are relevant to farmers market managers and the farmers market industry. It is really one of the most comprehensive tools available assessing farmers market performance. The National Farmers Market Survey is executed by the USDA in cooperation with Michigan State University.

### **I just filled out something like this from USDA last month. Why are you asking again?**

You may have recently participated in the update of the USDA National Farmers Market Directory. (And if you did, thank you!). While the annual USDA National Farmers Market Directory helps USDA and farmers market stakeholders like market organizers and managers, community planners and local/regional/Federal policymakers understand the basic profile of the U.S. farmers market industry, it is mostly a current snapshot of farmers markets and only provides a limited amount of information regarding industry developments, trends, and impacts. On the contrary, the [USDA National Farmers Market Managers Survey](#) is explicitly designed to provide an in-depth, thorough and comprehensive assessment of the U.S. farmers market sector. The Survey helps market managers, planners and organizers make better informed decisions about how to operate their market and gives them relevant data for how to leverage sales, increase performance and make the economic case for farmers markets in their communities.

### **How will the USDA National Farmers Market Survey help my market specifically?**

The USDA National Farmers Market Manager Survey is summarized into an easy-to-read report that identifies sales data, customer information, vendor profiles, and market trends nationally. The data is also analyzed based on region, market size, and maturity. This means that a new farmers market in Michigan for example can evaluate how they perform against Midwestern markets specifically, as well as other markets of the same age nationally. Likewise, large farmers markets in Arkansas can improve their performance based on experiences of similar sized markets in nearby Alabama or far away Arizona.

### **When was the last Survey taken and what did it find?**

The last USDA National Farmers Market Managers Survey happened in 2006 and yielded an astonishing amount of data. Among [the findings in the 2006 Survey](#) were:

- Farmers markets that offered organic products had higher customer counts and sales than markets that did not offer organic products.
- Farmers markets that operate 7 months a year or more experienced average sales that were nearly three times as high as their “season-only” counterparts.
- More than 60 percent of farmers markets require vendors to only sell products they have produced themselves.

- Nearly half of the country's farmers markets draw all their operating funds from vendor fees.
- The vast majority of farmers markets rely on volunteer labor and 60 percent of markets are run by volunteer market managers.
- Over 20 percent of farmers markets have an active program to glean for community- based social service or food pantry agencies.

#### **When will the results of the USDA National Farmers Market Managers Survey be released?**

The USDA will be collecting data and receiving completed Surveys through August 6, 2010. Once all data is in, it takes us a few months to compile and analyze the results into a readable and useable report, which should be published in 2011.

#### **Who else uses the Survey results?**

The USDA Farmers Market Survey is a valuable tool for market managers, researchers and farmers market stakeholders alike. Organizations like American Farmland Trust, the Farmers Market Coalition and various State Departments of Agriculture rely on the Survey to help identify farmers market trends and help farmers market managers address them. University researchers and educators rely on the Survey data to closely analyze farmers market performance and impact and monitor any changes or developments.

#### **Why is the USDA National Farmers Market Managers Survey being done now?**

While we realize that it is high market season for farmers markets in many areas of the country and market managers are really busy, we also know that this is the best time to catch market managers in action. As the number of operational farmers markets continues to grow, we want to reach as many market managers as possible. Furthermore, by launching the Survey in the middle of the 2010 calendar year, we are able to capture a complete reading of the last full market cycle in 2009.

#### **Anything else I should know as I complete the USDA National Farmers Market Survey?**

It should take you no more than 20 minutes to [complete the Survey](#). Once you start in on it, however, you will not be able to go back so we recommend you print it out first for review. Whenever possible, please ensure that the individual most closely involved with managing the market during the 2009 season is the person who fills out the Survey.